

The American Observer

A free, virtuous, and enlightened people must know well the great principles and causes on which their happiness depends.—James Monroe

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Big Controversy Over "Controls"

Truman's Request for New Economic Curbs Spurs Debate on Prices and Wages

ANOTHER battle over "controls" is shaping up in Congress. For the past few weeks, the lawmakers have been hearing testimony on whether or not the government should continue to keep prices and wages under close restraint. Extreme differences of opinion have developed.

The matter of controls is coming up once more because the Defense Production Act expires on June 30. That law, passed last September, gave the President extensive powers to speed up defense production and to keep our economy on an even keel. One of the principal powers granted the Chief Executive was that of imposing controls on prices and wages. Mr. Truman wants the act extended and has asked that it be strengthened in a number of ways.

It is generally felt by political observers that parts of the Defense Production Act will be extended. The law touches upon so many aspects of the defense production program that it seems unlikely that Congress would allow it to expire completely. It remains to be seen, though, what will be done concerning price and wage controls. A heated controversy is developing over this part of the act.

Much of the present debate involves steps which have been taken in recent months to regulate prices and wages. These steps have been carried out under the Office of Economic Stabilization. Headed by Eric Johnston, this

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IN FRANCE, national elections are less than a week away, and candidates are divided into three main groups—Communists, de Gaulleists, and members of the middle parties which have controlled the outgoing National Assembly

French Election Next Sunday

Numerous Political Parties Contend for Votes in Nation's Most Important Balloting Since 1946. General Charles de Gaulle Bids for Power

NEXT Sunday, June 17, the people of France will go to the polls for their most important election since 1946. They are to choose members of the National Assembly, their principal house of Parliament. America and western Europe are watching this balloting in hope that the outcome will give France a more stable government than she has had for several years.

The present Assembly, whose term expires on July 4, contains representatives from a dozen or more political parties. No one of these parties has anything near a majority in the law-making body. Therefore, little can be accomplished unless several groups

manage to work together. At times, during recent years, such cooperation has been impossible, and the country's government has been left in a stalemate.

France's chief executive official—the Premier—can hold office only so long as he can keep the support of a majority in the Assembly. In order to have such support he must hold several parties together in a combination or coalition. When the coalition falls apart, the Premier is no longer able to command a majority. Then he and his entire cabinet must resign. This has often happened in recent years. France has a President whose term

of office lasts seven years, but he possesses few powers. His main function is this: Whenever a Premier resigns, the President must find someone else for the job—someone who can satisfy, for a little while at least, a majority of the Assembly delegates. Since 1946, President Vincent Auriol frequently has had to perform this task.

Numerous outside observers look upon French politics and government as a scene of complete chaos. Actually, the situation is not quite as bad as it may appear. The resignation of a Premier and cabinet does not cause all the governmental machinery of the nation to break down. Routine work of the various departments and bureaus continues, directed by permanent officials below cabinet rank.

On the other hand, frequent changes in the premiership and in the cabinet do cause serious difficulty. They interfere with the making of decisions on important political and economic issues. Although France has made considerable progress since World War II, she is severely handicapped by her unstable government—by the bickering of her numerous political parties.

The main groups that have been contending for power in postwar France can be put in three categories: the Communists, the followers of Charles de Gaulle, and the "center parties." We present here a brief description of each.

Communists. They have the largest representation of any single party in the present Assembly. During the period of extreme unrest and confusion that came immediately after World War II, the Communists gained great influence. They got 6 million votes in the French elections of 1946 and, together with their close followers, obtained about 30 per cent of the Assembly seats.

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Walter E. Myer

Marks of an Educated Man

By Walter E. Myer

A BRITISH educator once said that there are three acid tests of an "educated man." Can he entertain a new idea? Can he entertain another person? Can he entertain himself?

Ability to acquire new ideas is undoubtedly an achievement. The person who closes his mind, who will not listen to arguments, who pays no attention to evidence against the position he has taken, is not educated, however long he may have attended school and college and whatever his grades may have been.

Education is growth, and there is no growth without change. This does not mean that a person should accept every new idea that comes along. One should change his mind only when there is reason for doing so. But the educated individual is always on the lookout for new facts and ideas.

The second test is equally important.

If a person is a bore, if there is something about him, about his behavior or his conversation, that makes him unwelcome in any group, he has failed to develop into a totally well-educated person.

To remedy this situation one must study his shortcomings. Perhaps he talks too much, in which case he must give others a chance to be heard, must become an attentive listener. He may be self-centered, too little concerned about matters of general interest.

Tragic indeed is the case of those who fail to meet the third test. It is bad enough to be boring to others. It is worse for one to bore himself. Many people do. When left to themselves they are restless, uneasy and unhappy. They have not developed a variety of interests. One who likes to read, who engages in sports, who has hobbies, avoids the misfortune of boredom.

If you can meet the three tests you will grow in intellectual power. You will be popular, you will have many loyal friends, and you will be on the

road to personal happiness. You will have learned a great deal about the art of successful living.

To be well educated, you must, of course, pass other tests. You must broaden your sympathies and interest yourself in community, national, and world problems.

One may be agreeable and even helpful to the people with whom he associates and he may find life interesting to himself and, at the same time, his education may be quite inadequate. We are all affected deeply these days by what goes on in our nation and in the world. This is true in a sense and to a degree that was not true in earlier times. To be educated in this modern age, one must have an understanding interest in politics, economics, and international affairs.

While the analysis of the British educator does not cover the whole problem of education, it remains true that you will be making a good start if you give attention to the goals which the official has outlined for us.

Prices-Wages

(Concluded from page 1)

agency is playing a major part in the defense production set-up. Johnston's main assistants are Michael DiSalle, in charge of price controls, and an 18-man board under the chairmanship of Dr. George Taylor, supervising curbs on wages.

A review of existing economic curbs starts, for all practical purposes, with last January. Although Mr. Truman was given power in September to impose price and wage controls, the first major step toward those objectives was not taken until four months later. On January 26 the majority of prices and wages were frozen at the levels which, for the most part, were prevailing at that time. The purpose of the curbs, the government said, was to stop the rapid rise of prices and wages which had been taking place ever since the Korean war began.

More recently, a number of important developments have taken place. The general freeze imposed on the prices of most items has been replaced to a large degree by a "mark-up" system. Under the latter, most merchants are allowed to mark up merchandise a specified amount over the price they paid for it.

The mark-up system now applies to thousands of items purchased in retail stores, including many foods. On some items it has resulted in a slight increase in prices; on others it has brought about a slight decrease. In both cases the prices continue to be strictly controlled by the government, except for some items which are specifically exempted.

The most controversial development under the price-control program has



UNCLE SAM has a tough job dealing with the twin problems of wages and prices

ing of about 10 cents a pound on beef for the housewife.

Ever since the roll-back took place, a heated controversy has gone on over the move. Cattlemen oppose the order. They contend that it will cause black markets to arise, and say that it will cause underweight cattle to be rushed to market before the price cuts scheduled for August and October go into effect. Some observers say that owners will keep their cattle off the market if beef prices are kept under control. In general, the cattlemen predict that the moves of the government to roll back beef prices will result in a scarcity of meat for the consumer.

In answer to these charges the Office of Price Stabilization answers that it will be very difficult for black markets to arise since slaughter houses must register with the government and all meat must be marked. Thus, enforcement agents can easily determine where beef was prepared for market. Spokesmen for the OPS say that beef has been selling at extremely high prices. They say that if a firm stand is to be made anywhere in keeping prices in check, then certainly it should be made in respect to beef.

Debate Stirred

While the imposition of price controls has caused a good deal of controversy, the government's attempt to control wages has stirred up even more debate. As we have already noted, wages were frozen late in January. About one month later it was decided by the Wage Stabilization Board to allow pay scales to rise 10 per cent above the levels of January 15, 1950.

Organized labor groups opposed this decision on the grounds that a 10 per cent increase was not enough. Their representatives withdrew from the Wage Stabilization Board and from other positions in the defense mobilization set-up. They said labor should have a bigger role in the program.

In April the labor groups returned to participate in the mobilization program when some of their demands were met. A new Wage Stabilization Board was set up. Six members of the 18-member group represent labor, six represent management, and six represent the public. The board deals not only with the matter of wage controls but also hears disputes which arise out of collective bargaining.

In recent weeks a relaxation of the 10 per cent formula for wage increases has been indicated. For example, the Wage Stabilization Board has permitted some 220,000 meat-packing workers an increase in wages that

took them to 14 per cent over their pay levels of January 1950. The WSB has also approved clauses in some union contracts which authorize wages to go up as the cost of living increases.

All in all, it is generally felt that further conflict on the wage issue is inevitable in the weeks ahead. Most labor officials feel that wages should be allowed to go up further, while many other groups think the line should be held at the present level.

Those who think that wage curbs should be relaxed argue as follows:

"The cost of living has risen so fast in the past year that most workers are not as well off as they were before the Korean war started. Certainly wages should be permitted to rise sufficiently to compensate for increased living costs. At a time when increased production is badly needed, the freezing of wages at present levels is likely to hamper the defense effort. No worker is going to be encouraged to turn out more work if he knows that his purchasing power is actually decreasing."

To this argument, those who think the present controls on wages should continue in force reply:

"With an increasing amount of our output going to the armed forces, the big thing we must guard against is inflation. Rising wages are a big factor in intensifying inflation, and they should be controlled just as prices are. If wages are left unchecked, it will inevitably bring demands for further price rises, and inflation will run wild. Also, with a scarcity of workers in some industries, there would be much shifting from job to job if we did not have strict curbs on wages."

It is against this background of controversy concerning price and wage controls that Congress is considering the requests made by President Truman for extending and strengthening the Defense Production Act.

One of Mr. Truman's recommendations is for strengthening of the price-control machinery. At present there are 14 regional and 89 district offices in various parts of the country to help Mr. DiSalle enforce existing price controls. When court action becomes necessary, the Department of Justice steps in and takes over enforcement measures. However, President Truman feels that the enforcement machinery should be further strengthened, and has asked for stiffer penalties against lawbreakers.

Another request made by the President is that stronger curbs be enacted on both commercial and residential rents. At present rents on housing

are controlled in some areas, but in most parts of the country controls have been removed since World War II. Mr. Truman believes that uncurbed rents intensify inflation. He has asked Congress for an effective rent-control law.

Third Request

A third request of the President is one concerning the price of farm products. Under present laws the prices of many of these products cannot be controlled as long as they are below "parity." Parity is a figure at which farmers are supposed to be getting a fair return in relation to their costs. It is figured monthly, and when costs go up, then parity goes up, too.

Mr. Truman has requested that parity be figured only once a year for each crop—at the beginning of the marketing season. Such a step, he thinks, would stabilize food prices to a greater degree than at present.

Among the other recommendations of Mr. Truman for strengthening the Defense Production Act are the following: (1) authorize payments from the government to spur the output of essential items; (2) authorize the government to build and operate defense plants, if necessary; (3) regulate speculation on commodities; (4) put further curbs on loans to home-buyers.

Some of the President's requests are already meeting with considerable opposition. For example, real estate groups are opposing rent controls and the suggested curbs on housing credit. Farm groups are generally against Mr. Truman's parity proposal.

Opposition to various parts of the controls program has led to demands from some quarters that all controls be ended. Those favoring this view say that controls are troublesome and involve complicated bookkeeping and endless red tape. They say that the law of supply and demand, if allowed to function, would in the long run bring prices and wages to fair levels.

To this argument government spokesmen reply that we are entering a period when there will be many shortages, and that the supply of some civilian goods and services cannot possibly fulfill the demand. In such a period, inflation would run wild if prices and wages were not checked.

Just what action Congress will take toward extending and strengthening the Defense Production Act remains to be seen. Many observers feel that the lawmakers will not be able to act on a new law by June 30 but will perhaps extend the old law for 60 or 90 days. Then, it is felt, they will have sufficient time to study the workings of the old law and decide what to do about extending or altering it.



DIRECTOR of Price Stabilization, Michael DiSalle

probably been the roll-back of beef prices. Several weeks ago Price Stabilizer DiSalle ordered beef livestock prices to be cut by 10 per cent. These are the prices received by cattlemen when they sell their livestock.

Mr. DiSalle also announced two future cuts, each of 4½ per cent. One is scheduled for August 1 and the other for October 1. At the same time price ceilings have been fixed for sellers of meat to consumers. Previously meat producers had been left free of controls when the general freeze was imposed in January.

The purpose of the roll-back, according to Mr. DiSalle, is to lower the price of beef for the consumer. Although the 10 per cent roll-back is not believed to have lowered prices much at the consumer level, it is the opinion of Mr. DiSalle that the two additional roll-backs will eventually mean a sav-



SOARING into the wild blue yonder go food prices, but efforts are being made to check them

Weekly Digest of Fact and Opinion

(The views expressed on this page are not necessarily endorsed by THE AMERICAN OBSERVER.)

"When Dollars Run to Cover," by Richard B. Gehman, Nation's Business.

In this inflationary period, man's old pursuit of the dollar has been thrown suddenly into reverse. Today, as a hedge against inflation, the sensible thing seems to be not to pursue the dollar, but to get rid of it by changing it into possessions of lasting value.

This sort of thing has been common in Europe for centuries. Europeans have always known that currency is undependable—and therefore far inferior to precious stones, paintings, and fine furniture. They have put



MONEY loses a great deal of its value during periods of inflation, so people often try to store their wealth in other forms

their capital, wherever possible, into articles that could be easily carried and readily sold.

In the past two years, more and more Americans—not only the rich, but people of moderate means—have come to realize that the Europeans' system of hedging may be the safest way to tame the fleeing dollar.

Stamps and coins are popular with hedgers. Their small size makes them easy to conceal, and their value ordinarily increases with age. Of late, both businesses have been doing more than nicely in this country. So has the sale of early American furniture. Precious stones, particularly uncut diamonds, are getting the largest play in hedging.

It is well to realize, however, that the inflation problem cannot be satisfactorily solved by hedging in any form. Sylvia Porter, a writer on economics, recently summed it up neatly. "There is no true hedge against inflation," she said, "except the prevention of it."

"How to Beat Communism in an Under-Developed Area," by Peter Edson, National Editorial Association.

Camana is a little town in southern Peru. Not long ago everyone in the valley there was supposed to be a Communist. Sometime between the two world wars a Communist agent had gotten into the isolated valley and done a real job of organizing it. That was easy because the valley was a kind of rural slum.

Shortly after the end of the last war, Peru's President José Luis Bustamante called in Jack Neale, an Institute of Inter-American Affairs director in Peru. Jack used to be a county agent in Wyoming.

Bustamante told Neale that he was having trouble with Communist unrest

in Camana. The President asked Neale to set up an IIAA office there. This office, jointly financed by U. S. and Peruvian government funds, would help the people with their farming, health, and education.

Neale did so. He himself traveled around the valley to see what was needed there. He got the people insecticides and tractors and taught them how to use them. He made the irrigation system work better and arranged for the building of a new rice mill.

"Today," says Jack Neale with pardonable pride, "the income of Camana Valley is five times what it was before our office was opened. And there isn't a Communist in the valley."

"Propaganda for Democracy" is advocated in this letter of Heinz Kohler, a German student in Berlin-Neukölln.

In the April 16 issue of THE AMERICAN OBSERVER, there was an article on your foreign policy. Though I think that it is very risky to judge of the policy of a country I never have seen, I will say my opinion about this question.

I think you should not try to intervene in another country's internal affairs, at least so long as it is possible. This does not mean, of course, that you shall stand aside and do nothing. On the contrary, you openly should show your disagreement with undemocratic actions of any country. Besides this you indefatigably should try to inform the countries in question of your standpoint. Then the people alone could decide in favour of the actions of their government or against them.

I am sure they would decide in favour of democracy, all these people behind the Iron Curtain. But they are in a sad condition, for they do not know what democracy is. There are two reasons for this: Most of them never lived in a democratic country, and nobody tells them about democracy. The Voice of America opposite to the immense propaganda of communism is like a drop of water opposite to a conflagration.

Therefore I think that it is one of the chief problems in Europe to intensify the voice of the free world.

I lived for five years behind the Iron Curtain and had to experience

that every opposition against the abuse of fundamental human freedoms dies down if you live there for several years without hearing a word of the other, free part of the world.

So I have come to the opinion that you could render an immense service for democracy in Europe by opposing to the communistic propaganda the propaganda of the free world.

"Defense and the Public Schools," by Dorothy Thompson, Ladies' Home Journal.

Whenever a nation makes an extraordinary effort in one direction, it has to cut down its efforts in others. Even a country and people as productive as our own can't have everything simultaneously. As long as military demands are accorded first place in the economy, civilian projects will have to be reduced or postponed.

But education is a social service that must not be cut back or even frozen at its present level. It must expand.

Unfortunately the rearmament program starts when the schools are far from being up to standard. They need more teachers and more buildings. In some places, notably in cities of between 30,000 and 100,000 population, the service is approximately adequate. But in the great cities—those of half a million or over—it is seriously substandard, as it is, to a lesser degree, in the smaller communities. On the whole, our school population has been growing much faster than the facilities available.

The National Citizens Committee for the Public Schools, 2 West 45th Street, New York 18, N. Y., is prepared to advise citizens how to organize for the preservation and, if necessary, the expansion of their school systems. By and large, communities will have good and adequate schools when the parents of the pupils are actively aware of the school situation and energetically organized to support and improve it.

"Denver Becoming 'Nation's Second Capital,'" by Edward O. Ethell, an Associated Press feature in The Washington Post.

Old-timers aren't sure they like it, but this drowsy city is coming of age. There's a roaring defense boom, complete with atomic plant. Big business is moving in. The Federal Government sees Denver more and more



WE MUST NOT forget the problem of overcrowded schools, even though international troubles demand much attention

as the United States' second capital.

Already the streets are jammed with cars. Truck farms of five years ago sprout rows of neat small homes. Office and hotel space is at a premium.

Denver is second only to Washington in the number of government agencies represented. It has 8,600 federal workers, not counting military personnel.

There is talk of other government agencies' moving to Denver. Mentioned most often are the Federal Power Commission, Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Agriculture, and headquarters of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Meanwhile, small groups of employees are steadily being moved from Washington to Denver. General Services Administrator Jess Larson came out recently for a look around.

"Denver stands out in our eyes as a desirable center of government," he commented. "That's why we would like to make a maximum concentration of government offices here."

"American Song," editorial comment in Christian Science Monitor.

"I hear America singing," wrote Walt Whitman in an early interpretation of the Voice of America as a great, full-throated chorus. The mechanic singing, "blithe and strong"; the shoemaker, the plowboy, the young wife at work, the girl sewing or washing—"Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else."

The song that is the American promise of a free and abundant life for every individual is going out through many unofficial channels. Perhaps none is more important than the letters Americans send abroad. Almost half a million went to Russia last year.

Americans writing to friends or relatives abroad have the chance to make their letters really reflect the truth about their country. Not through empty boasting, not necessarily through political discussion, certainly not through anything that would endanger the recipients in police states, but through their individual expression of the spirit and details of free life in a free land.

Such a tide of letters from Italian-Americans helped to turn back the Communist threat in Italy a few years ago, and it can help to promote world peace today. The Common Council for American Unity has urged Americans to take more conscious thought on this matter. Like Whitman's free individual, all of us can take part in that greater chorus of shared experience.



IN PERU, helping the farmers to earn a better living proves to be a good way of fighting communism

The Story of the Week

UN Peace Efforts

Now, almost one year after the start of the Korean war, the United Nations is once again striving to bring an end to the fighting in Korea. The UN wants the Communists to lay down their arms, then to open peace talks with the world organization's representatives. As we go to press, however, no end to the strife and bloodshed in Korea appears in sight, despite an increasing number of reports that the aggressors are getting ready to stop hostilities.

The UN's present effort to end the Korean fighting is one of many peace proposals made to the Communists. Here, in brief, are some of its earlier peace efforts:

June 25, the day on which the Communists struck in Korea, the UN Security Council in an emergency meeting called on the North Koreans to "cease hostilities" and to withdraw to their own territories. The Communists ignored the appeal.

November 8, a few days after the Chinese Communists entered the war, the UN asked Chinese officials to come to New York to discuss peace terms. China sent her representatives, but no agreement was reached.

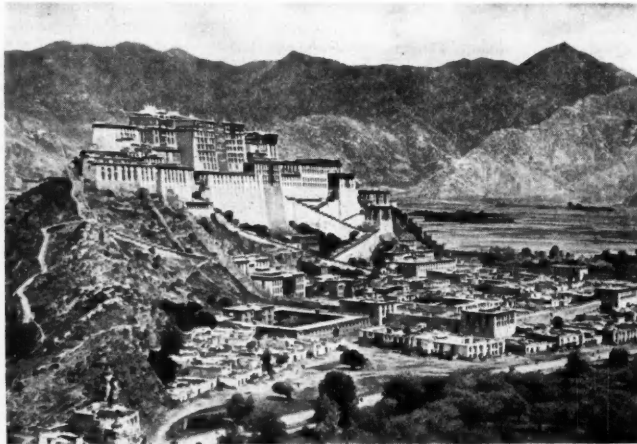
January 13, the UN sent its own peace plan to China. It provided for a cease-fire order and the creation of a special body to discuss all Far Eastern problems. The Chinese Communists rejected the plan.

February 2, the General Assembly adopted a resolution naming Communist China an aggressor in Korea. It also set up a three-man group to try for a peaceful settlement in the Far East. Thus far, the UN body has been unable to reach the Communist rulers in China for the purpose of holding peace discussions.

China Takes Tibet

Tibet, the remote, little-known country lying north of India, has become a part of Communist China. In a recent treaty forced upon Tibet by the Chinese rulers, the high, mountainous land was officially made a province of its giant Communist neighbor.

The new treaty ends Tibet's short struggle to halt the Chinese aggressors who began their campaign of conquest late last summer. The Tibetans, hav-



MOUNTAINOUS TIBET is now controlled by Communist China. The Dalai Lama, young Tibetan ruler, fled from this palace some time ago as Communist forces approached.

ing few trained soldiers and practically no modern weapons, were unable to halt the invaders. After a few brief skirmishes, the Chinese were in control of important areas of the conquered land.

Tibet has always been a land of mystery. Little is known about her because she is cut off from the rest of the world by towering mountains, and by her desire to remain isolated. Tibet is a theocracy; that is, she is ruled by a religious government. China has long considered this land part of her domain, but since 1911 Tibet has really been an independent nation.

Under the new treaty, the Communists have agreed to let the Dalai Lama, Tibet's religious leader, keep his title; but the country is actually to be under complete Communist control. The land's foreign affairs, trade, and troops are to be directed by Chinese officials. Moreover, Communist troops are being stationed throughout Tibet to keep down any threat to Chinese authority there.

GI Study Ends

July 25 is the deadline for veterans to start training programs which are paid for by the government under the GI Bill of Rights. All those who are eligible and who want the GI school benefits must begin studies on or before that date.

The cut-off date, however, does not apply to disabled veterans. Special training for handicapped ex-GIs will continue indefinitely, government officials declare.

During seven years of operation, the GI Bill of Rights has helped millions of former servicemen. According to the Veterans' Administration, the government agency which directs the program, the following achievements have been made since the plan was started in 1944:

Some 10 million persons applied for study benefits. Of this number, more than 7½ million individuals have either started or completed special training and college courses. The entire cost of the program was more than 12 billion dollars.

Of the millions of young people who went to school under the GI Bill, many were trained to fill important defense jobs in this time of national emer-

gency. Thousands of engineers, radio technicians, electrical workers, and other trained personnel were prepared for jobs in armament plants. At least two million veterans were given special help in choosing their life's work under the GI program.

Political Parties Meet

With their eyes fixed on next year's Presidential elections, the nation's political leaders are setting the stage for the national conventions to be held in June or July of 1952. These are the meetings at which candidates for President and Vice-President are chosen by party leaders. A short time ago, both the Democrats and the Republicans chose Chicago as next year's convention city.

Party representatives from all 48 states and from U. S. territories will get together for the conventions in Chicago. The political delegates will not only decide on candidates for the Presidency and the Vice-presidency, but they will also discuss the issues at stake in the 1952 elections and they will write party platforms.

Meanwhile, state political leaders are busily at work in lining up the delegates to be sent to Chicago in 1952. In some states the political groups appoint the representatives to the national convention. In others, the delegates are selected by special statewide meetings called for that purpose. In still others, the voters choose the convention representatives in primary elections.

NATO Sea Chiefs

The Mediterranean Sea area has become one of the biggest trouble spots in the world. The center of important world trade routes, and with oil-rich nations near its shores, this region is one of Russia's primary targets of conquest. These statements were recently made by officials of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries as they discussed ways to boost Mediterranean defenses.

One of the big issues now being discussed by NATO leaders is how to strengthen the naval forces in the Mediterranean area. Plans for sea defenses have been slowed down, however, because of a squabble among the Treaty members over who should be

chosen commander of the Mediterranean fleets. A number of nations, including the U. S., feel the ships should be headed by an American admiral. Britain, on the other hand, argues in favor of a British sea leader.

The differences over the choice of a commander have reopened the issue of who is to be supreme naval chief of the NATO fleets. Some months ago, the pact nations almost completed arrangements to put Admiral William Fichteler, commander-in-chief of the U. S. Atlantic fleet, in supreme charge of their navies. At the same time, it was assumed that a British admiral would head the Mediterranean ships. Since neither of these proposals was ratified by all NATO nations, neither became effective.

Now, renewed efforts are being made to decide on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic commanders as quickly as possible.

Prairie "Work Horse"

Canadian ranchers and farmers are increasing their use of the airplane to get their work done. More and more of the same type of light planes which have been successfully used by ranchers in this country can be found in Canada's thinly inhabited western prairies.

The Canadians, many of whom live hundreds of miles from the nearest town, highly prize their small private planes. Not only do they use the craft to visit friends and to get their groceries, but also to do everyday farm chores. Their new "work horse" helps ranchers herd cattle, examine fences, spot cattle that are lost or hurt, and feed livestock marooned by floods or heavy snows.

Canadians who were formerly isolated during the winter use planes for year-round travel. Their rough, primitive roads are impassable several months each year, but ski-equipped planes can land and take off from ponds and plains even during the worst winter months.

Color Television

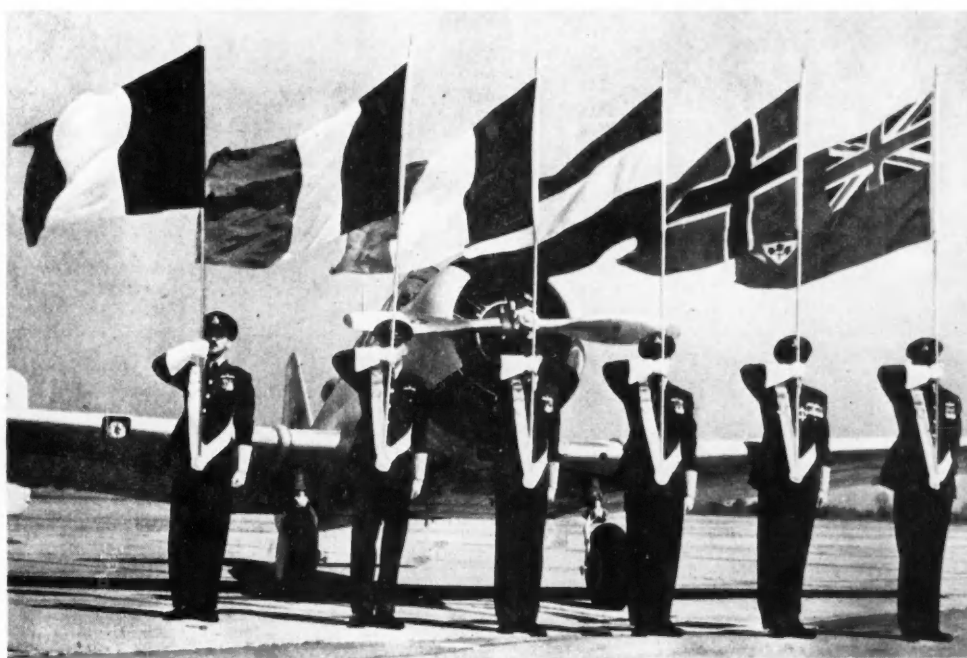
Television programs in color are a step nearer realization. The Supreme Court recently gave color video the green light when it upheld the Federal Communications Commission's deci-



FRENCH RAILROADS are looking for ways to improve their service. On some trains, passengers can now rent foam rubber cushions for use on the hard wooden seats that are found in third-class coaches.



BOTH PARTIES are already busy with plans for the 1952 campaign. Meanwhile, each accuses the other of wasting too much time on politics.



GRADUATION CEREMONY for young airmen from six North Atlantic Treaty countries takes place at a Canadian training center. Flags of the six nations, from left to right, are Belgian, French, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, and Canadian. Canada expects to train 1,400 European military flyers each year.

sion to grant the Columbia Broadcasting System the right to televise programs in color.

The FCC, the federal agency that regulates radio and television, had given CBS authority to go ahead with its TV color system last fall. Plans for color telecasts were held up, however, when other broadcasters challenged the FCC decision in court, on the grounds that their TV color methods, rather than the CBS system, should be approved. Now the Columbia Broadcasting System is free to televise programs in color.

If present owners of TV sets want to see the CBS telecasts, they must have changes made in their viewers. They must have an adapter to get the pictures in black and white and a converter to get the programs in color.

Owners of existing sets, however, need not fear that the new developments will deprive them of their favorite shows—at least not for a long time to come. Most program sponsors, it is believed, will be slow to shift their programs to the new medium, because they want the largest possible audiences. Since most of the 12 million sets now in use cannot receive color without alterations, most programs will probably continue to be in black and white for some time to come.

Universal Military Training

Universal military training for the nation's young men is a step closer to reality. After many months of debate, Congress recently decided on a blueprint for UMT, though it did not actually put the training program into effect. The lawmakers have suggested a plan which provides six months of military training for youths in the 18-19 age bracket.

A complete UMT program is to be worked out by a special five-man commission—three civilians and two military men—set up by Congress for that purpose. The group is required to

report its decisions to the legislators within four months, at which time Congress has agreed to take swift action on the proposals made.

Golf Winner

Dick Chapman, winner of the 1951 British amateur golf championship, is back in this country now, trying for new golf honors. He hopes to take additional trophies in this year's amateur contests.

Born in Pinehurst, North Carolina, Chapman is called "one of the most serious students of golf today," by some sportswriters. He gained his love for the game from his parents early in life. Both his father and his mother were golf champions in the 1920's and the 1930's. Even when he is off the fairways, Dick devotes his spare time to golf. He studies the techniques of other players and he designs his own golf sticks.

Chapman won his first title in 1930,

when he took the Eastern interscholastic tournament. Later he racked up many U. S. and foreign honors. His recent victory in England was his greatest triumph since winning the U. S. national championship in 1940.

Indo-China's War

The French-supported forces in Viet Nam, the narrow country on the eastern coast of French Indo-China, are again under heavy Communist attack. Ho Chi Minh's Communist armies launched a big offensive early this month in a desperate effort to gain control of Indo-China's rice. The enemy forces want the land's abundant rice crop which is now ready for harvest.

The Communists have already struck hard at several French fortress outposts which are a vital part of Viet Nam's defenses. No important forts, however, have fallen into enemy hands as we go to press.



BRITAIN is operating a new "atom school" to train scientists in the medical and industrial uses of radioactive isotopes. The isotopes are substances which give off rays after they have been treated in atomic laboratories.

News in Brief

A number of U. S. troops are soon to be organized as part of a world army. This country was the first UN member to announce that it is setting aside armed forces for use by the world organization against aggressors. All UN countries have been asked to contribute some of their troops to an international army agreed upon by the UN a short time ago. The member nations have until next fall to report on steps they have taken towards building up the UN force.

★ ★ ★

Citizens' groups in many parts of the nation are discussing the questions that were recently debated by the "American Assembly" in its meetings at Harriman, New York. The minutes of the American Assembly meetings (a group made up of representatives from business, labor, education and other walks of life) are being sent to any group in the country that wants to use them for discussion.

Founded by General Dwight Eisenhower, and directed by educational leaders of Columbia University, the American Assembly discusses many of the top issues of the day. In last month's meetings, the group reviewed the nation's foreign policies.

★ ★ ★

The United States High Commissioner for West Germany, John McCloy, recently declared that the Communists are training their supporters in Germany to commit sabotage. Soviet agents are mapping out certain duties for each Communist outside the Iron Curtain in case of war with Russia, McCloy said. Some are being taught how to erect road blocks and how to blow up bridges, while others are being trained to fight guerrilla wars against the western nations, he pointed out.

★ ★ ★

Are Soviet citizens always satisfied with the service of their government-owned stores? Reports show that they are not. Recently, a number of Russian people bitterly complained about the poor service given them by a large Moscow mail order house. They ordered goods shown in an impressive-looking catalogue and then waited for their purchases. Many of these customers heard nothing more of the money they sent to the store nor of the goods they ordered.

★ ★ ★

General Matthew Ridgway, the Far East Supreme Commander, believes the Chinese Communists are "almost defeated" in Korea. Unless Russia enters the fight in force, he recently declared, the Communists cannot beat the UN armies in that war-torn land. The general praised the high morale and the fighting abilities of the UN armed forces as the chief factors in stopping the aggressors in the Far East. Meanwhile, the morale of the Chinese Communists seems to be weakening. Ridgway declared—over 10,000 Chinese troops surrendered recently.

★ ★ ★

Have our scientists made any progress toward producing a workable hydrogen bomb? Some observers believe a significant start in perfecting the dread weapon was made in recent months. They point out that some of the U. S. atomic weapons tests, which were conducted on the Pacific island of Eniwetok, included advanced H-bomb experiments.



COMPETITION between civilian and military needs is putting great pressure on France. Tractors, like the one at left, may be harder to obtain as rearmament proceeds.

French Election

(Concluded from page 1)

On practically every important issue that arises, Communist representatives vote against whoever happens to be Premier at the time. This is one of the reasons why it is so hard for a Premier to stay in power. Any sizable group of non-Communist lawmakers can, by voting with the Communists, rob him of a majority and throw him out of office.

The French Communists, like those in other countries, take directions from Moscow. They oppose France's efforts to work with other western nations and build strong defenses against Soviet aggression.

During the last few years, communism has become increasingly unpopular in many sections of western Europe. This is partly a result of Russia's aggressive policies. Also, it is a result of recent improvements in western European economic conditions. People are far less inclined now, than they were at the close of World War II, to turn in desperation to radical new political and economic systems. In France there is widespread feeling that the Communists will win considerably fewer Assembly seats this year than they won in 1946.

De Gaullists. General Charles de Gaulle emerged from World War II as France's greatest living military hero. From overseas, he had led the French forces that continued to fight against the Nazis while France herself was under German rule. Then he became head of the temporary government that was established when Allied troops liberated his country. Early in 1946 he stepped out of office.

Later, after the present French constitution had gone into effect, de Gaulle became deeply dissatisfied with the way in which the government was operating. He felt that the continual shifting and reshuffling of Premiers and cabinets left France dangerously weak. So he re-entered the political scene and called upon the French to end their bickering and to unite in a new movement under his leadership. He called this movement the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (Rally of the French People) or RPF.

The RPF did not come into existence

until after the present National Assembly had been elected. For this reason, there are not many followers of de Gaulle among the outgoing lawmakers. During the current election campaign, however, the famous warrior is making a vigorous appeal for votes, and his candidates are likely to win a great many Assembly posts.

What policies does de Gaulle favor? This is a difficult question, because he says little about specific programs. In general, he stands on his reputation as a military chief, and asks people simply to trust his leadership.

It is known, however, that he favors taking stern measures against the French Communists, that he would like to restrict the political activities of labor unions, and that he wants France to build a very powerful army. On some occasions he has accused the United States of seeking to exert too much influence on France. It is widely believed, however, that if he were in a position of authority he would have France continue cooperating with our country.

Many observers fear that General de Gaulle wants to become a dictator. They point out that he is making his principal campaign appeal to the people's emotions, instead of presenting solid arguments in behalf of his party.

This is the method by which many dictators have risen to power.

De Gaulle's supporters, however, declare that he could have become dictator of France immediately after World War II if he had wanted to do so. They insist that he has never sought to override the wishes of the people, and that he never will.

Center Parties. These are the groups that have been governing France during the last several years. They refer to themselves as "center" parties because they feel that their two major opponents—the Communists and the de Gaullists—represent extreme, though widely differing, viewpoints.

Outstanding center parties are the Socialists, the Popular Republicans, and a conservative group—made up largely of farmers and businessmen—that calls itself *Radical Socialist*. These organizations disagree with one another on many points. For instance, the Socialists declare that the government should own and operate more major industries than it does now; "Radical Socialists" oppose government ownership; and Popular Republicans are divided on the issue.

These groups and a few smaller parties are held together mainly by opposition to the Communists and the

de Gaullists. Most of the time, they have given one another enough support to command a majority of the votes in the present Assembly. But the majority has been slim, so that any small bloc of representatives from the center parties could—if dissatisfied—throw votes to the opposition and force the Premier out of office. This has happened often.

The center parties hope to win enough Assembly seats, in next Sunday's election, that they will have a more comfortable majority from now on. De Gaulle's forces, on the other hand, hope to see the center groups so badly weakened that they will be forced to bargain with de Gaulle for support against the Communists. The General's supporters also see the possibility that, if political confusion continues, more and more people will turn to de Gaulle for leadership.

The present election finds France in a far better condition than prevailed during the 1946 balloting. At that time she was suffering terribly from the damage of World War II. Farm and factory output was low, and transportation lines were in bad shape. Today France is producing well over one and a third times as much as she was just before the conflict began.

Nevertheless, serious problems remain. Prices have climbed rapidly during the last few years; and wages, in many cases, have not risen enough to keep up with the cost of living. Workers' dissatisfaction over this situation may influence the election.

The dangerous international scene, too, is being discussed and debated during the political campaign. France is already at war with Communists in Indo-China, and she knows that if a world conflict occurs in the near future, her own homeland is likely to be overrun and occupied by Soviet armies. Some of the French argue that the best hope of avoiding such a disaster lies in trying neutrality in case of an all-out conflict between Russia and the United States. Others reply that neutrality would offer no escape from the danger of Soviet aggression, and that the best policy is to cooperate with other nations in building western defenses as rapidly as possible.

The lawmakers whom France elects this month will face big and troublesome problems, both in world affairs and on the home front.



IN PREPARATION for the elections, French citizens examine political posters.

Newsmaker

GENERAL Charles de Gaulle, one of the most powerful political leaders in France today, is calling on his country's voters to support him in next Sunday's elections. As head of the Rally of the French People, de Gaulle has a large following among his countrymen.

Born 60 years ago in Lille, one of France's chief manufacturing cities, General de Gaulle became interested in a military career early in life. As a boy he enjoyed hearing the tales of famous French military heroes. After living in Paris for a time with his father, who taught philosophy and literature in a college there, he went to Saint-Cyr—the "West Point" of France.

In 1911, Charles de Gaulle graduated from military school with high honors. Becoming an officer in the French Army, he fought brilliantly in World War I. He was wounded several times in battle before he was captured by the Germans.

After the war ended, de Gaulle taught in French military academies. He also headed some of his country's military missions in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Despite all these activities, he still found time to write books on war and philosophy.

In the 1930's, General de Gaulle's views caused violent disagreements among France's top military leaders. Some agreed with de Gaulle when he predicted that the approaching war would be fought by highly mechanized units and that fortifications, such as France's Maginot Line, would be almost useless. Others argued in favor of building strong fortifications. When the general's views were finally adopted, it was too late. Germany invaded and crushed France in 1940.

After the French armies crumbled under the German onslaught, de Gaulle immediately set up a resistance movement outside the country. From England and from French lands in Africa, he continued to fight the Nazis. In August 1944, he triumphantly returned to Paris as the Germans were being driven from France. He then headed a temporary regime which governed France until early 1946.

Though thousands of French citizens cheer the tall (6 feet, 4 inches) de Gaulle, he is said to have few close personal friends. His enemies charge the French leader with trying to set up a one-man dictatorship over France. His friends say the general wants nothing more than a government strong enough to combat the Communist menace in France.



CHARLES DE GAULLE



TESTING CANNED FOOD for spoilage is one of the important jobs of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration

SERVING THE NATION

Food and Drug Administration

(This is the third in a series of special features about government agencies which serve the nation in unusual ways.)

WHEN you visit your corner store, with its rows of cans, jars, and boxes lining the shelves, you can shop with confidence. Although you cannot see the contents of a certain package you may want to buy, its label tells you it contains two pounds of pure cane sugar. You trust this label. You feel quite sure you will not later discover that the package is filled with sand, or that the sugar is spoiled, or that the contents weigh only one pound.

Shopping for sugar and thousands of other foods, medicines, and cosmetics is made easier and safer for you by a bureau of the Federal Security Agency. This bureau, the Food and Drug Administration, administers the national Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Law.

Nation-wide food and drug laws came into existence in the early part of this century, when prepared foods and medicines in small, individual containers were being introduced in stores across the nation. Most food and medicine manufacturers tried to give the public only clean, wholesome products. A few dishonest members of these industries, however, sold foods that contained harmful chemicals, or mixed dirty ingredients with their products, or made extravagant claims that their medicines would cure every disease imaginable.

In 1906, therefore, Congress enacted a food and drug law, designed to prevent dangerous or mislabeled goods from reaching the American people. A more elaborate food and drug law was passed in 1938, in order to correct some of the imperfections of the old law.

The Food and Drug law protects the consumer in a number of ways. For example, the label on a package must give you certain information about its contents. The label must tell you how much the contents weigh, and it must give you the popular name of each ingredient. The package may not have a false bottom to deceive you into believing its contents are greater than they actually are.

This law also authorizes the Food and Drug Administration to inspect

shipments of food and other products to make certain they are not harmful, or spoiled, or infested with insects. The administration may seize and destroy products which it knows to be dangerous to the public health. Last year Food and Drug investigators discovered over 3,500 batches of foods and medicines that violated the law.

The administration may, in addition, set up standards and rules that a food or drug manufacturer must follow. For example, it may fix a legal limit on the amount of moisture a loaf of bread can contain, so the bread will not be weighted too heavily with water. Reliable manufacturers welcome such standards, which protect them from dishonest competitors.

The Food and Drug Administration operates one of the world's finest laboratories for testing foods and medicines scientifically. Physicians, chemists, biologists, and other highly-skilled men and women regularly have to determine such things as whether a certain breakfast cereal actually contains all the vitamins claimed by its manufacturer.

Congress is now investigating the use of new chemicals in foods, such as those employed to soften bread. More and more of these chemicals are being introduced every year, but at present very little is known about their effects on the human body. Many scientists believe certain of the chemicals may be dangerous if taken into the body over long periods of time.

There has been some controversy over whether a new law should be passed which would permit the Food and Drug Administration to prohibit the use of these chemicals unless they are proven to be not harmful. Some people argue that the present law is adequate, since the Food and Drug Administration can conduct experiments to discover if the chemicals are dangerous. If it finds they are harmful, it can prevent or limit their use.

Others contend that a change in the present law is necessary. These persons argue that use of the chemicals should not be permitted until they are shown to be safe, because it would take many years of scientific research to find out if they are dangerous. Meanwhile, it is argued, thousands of Americans might suffer permanent injury, if the chemicals should prove harmful.

Study Guide

Price and Wage Controls

1. Why is another battle over controls shaping up in Congress at this particular time?
2. What major step was taken toward controls last January?
3. How has the "freeze" on prices been modified since that time?
4. Give briefly the pros and cons of the controversy over beef prices.
5. Trace the steps that have been taken since January respecting wage increases.
6. What arguments are advanced for and against relaxing present wage curbs?
7. Give three recommendations made by President Truman for strengthening the Defense Production Act.

Discussion

1. Do you think that changes should be made at this time in the program of price and wage controls? If so, what would you recommend? Why?
2. Of the recommendations made by Mr. Truman for strengthening the Defense Production Act, which do you feel is most important? Explain.

France

1. Why has the existence of numerous political parties, in France, made it difficult for any Premier to hold office long?
2. In what way have frequent governmental changes handicapped the nation?
3. About what percentage of seats in the outgoing National Assembly do the Communists and their followers hold?
4. How are the Communists expected to fare in next Sunday's elections?
5. List some of the policies that General de Gaulle appears to favor.
6. What big fear is expressed by de Gaulle's opponents? How do his supporters reply?
7. Describe the group of parties that is often called the "center."
8. How does France's economic condition today compare with what it was in 1946?

Discussion

If you were a citizen of France, which political group would you probably support in the coming elections? Give reasons for your answer.

Miscellaneous

1. What peace proposals has the United Nations made to the Communists in Korea?
2. What changes is Communist China making in Tibet?
3. When does the study program under the GI Bill of Rights end?
4. At which city will the nation's political parties meet in a national convention next year?
5. What is the cause of the slow-down in preparing the Mediterranean Sea defenses?
6. Who is Dick Chapman?

References

"How to End This Price-Wage Rat Race," by Oswald F. Schutte, *Changing Times*, June 1951. The author advances the view that the rising cost of living can be checked by tying wage increases to productivity.

"Price Controls: A Critical Review," by Louis J. Walinsky, *New Republic*, May 28, 1951. It is the author's opinion that selfish economic forces are taking steps which may do great harm to the price-control program.

"It's de Gaulle or Else in France," by Stephen White, *Look*, June 5, 1951.

"France," *United Nations World*, April 1951. A group of articles on the nation and its people.

Pronunciations

Jose Luis Bustamante—hō-zā' lōō-ēs' bōō'stah-mahn'tē

Dalai Lama—dah-li' lah'mah

Saint-Cyr—sān sēr'

Maginot—mah-zhē-nō'

Lille—lēl

Charles de Gaulle—shahr'l' duh gōl'

Rassemblement du Peuple Français—rā-sahm'bluh-mahn dew pōō-pl' frahn'sē

Background for Today's News

France—Center of Western Defense

NO matter what happens in Europe—whether peace or a third world war lies ahead—France will play an important role in the years to come. Its geographic position in the heart of western Europe makes this certain. Furthermore, France, though weakened by two World Wars, still has reservoirs of strength which can be tapped for the defense of the free world.

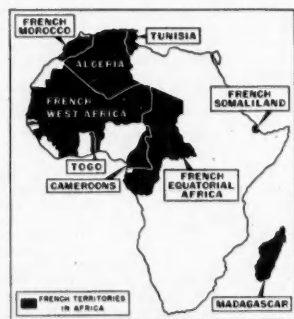
These facts are recognized by both France and her allies. From the very beginning, France has been a leading member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. And France was chosen as the headquarters of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander-in-chief of the new Western European army.

On page 1 of this issue of THE AMERICAN OBSERVER is a discussion of the current political situation in France. The remainder of this page will be devoted to a brief summary of important geographical and historical facts about France.

THE LAND. France is the largest country of Europe, outside of Russia. It is about the size of North and South Dakota and Nebraska combined. France contains many types of land—plains in the north, mountains along the borders in the south and east, rolling hills in the northwest, and a high plateau in the south central part of the country.

While France lies about as far north as southern Canada, it has much milder weather. Along the northwestern coast, the climate is similar to that of Washington and Oregon. The Mediterranean coast is somewhat like Southern California. Northeastern France has weather like Illinois and Indiana.

OVERSEAS POSSESSIONS. France has a large colonial empire whose total area is many times greater than that of France itself. The African possessions are shown on the map on this page. Among the most important of her possessions in other parts of the world are Indo-China, French Guiana in South America, New Caledonia in



French colonies in Africa

the Pacific Ocean, and Corsica in the Mediterranean. France carries on considerable trade with her colonies. Under France's constitution, the overseas territories have a voice in the French legislature. They have 75 members in the French National Assembly.

RESOURCES. Nature was generous with France. The country has, for the most part, good, productive soil. There are many rivers rising in the mountains which are capable of supplying

electric power, and about half have been harnessed. Nearly one sixth of the country is forested, although not with heavy stands of timber such as are found in the Scandinavian countries or Canada. In northeastern France are great beds of iron ore, the second richest in the world. In the same region are important coal fields. Other minerals found in France include bauxite, antimony, potash, lead, zinc, copper, nickel, and clay.

PEOPLE. France's population, which numbers about 42 million, has been increasing rapidly since World War II. The French are noted for being thrifty and hard working and for having a strong love for their country. However, from region to region they differ considerably in speech, dress, and customs.

EDUCATION. Illiteracy is no problem in France. An educational system, controlled by the national government, provides schooling for all boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 14. Students who are able to pass a severe system of examinations are eligible to go on to universities or professional schools.

Unfortunately, few children from the poorer families get a higher education. This is not because they are discriminated against, but because they usually must go to work as soon as possible to help support their families. Furthermore, there is little opportunity for students to work their way through college in the way that many young men and women do in the United States.

INDUSTRY. At least 40 per cent of the French people are engaged in manufacturing or commercial activities. There are many large iron and steel mills and other big industries which turn out machinery, munitions, automobiles, tractors, bicycles, textiles, furniture, perfume, cosmetics, and wine. But the goods for which France is most famous are those made by hand in little workrooms and shops—dresses, hats, gloves, tapestries, shawls, lace, ribbons, furs, shoes, and leather goods. The French are especially skilled in making things which require patient work by hand.

French industry is aided by the fact that the country has a good system of transportation. There are more than 26,000 miles of railroads and almost 200,000 miles of highways. In addition there are four large rivers and numerous smaller ones, all connected by a network of canals to make an inland waterway 9,000 miles long.

AGRICULTURE. More than half the French people earn a living by farming, and ordinarily they supply all the country's needs for food. Most farms are small, averaging about 24 acres each, and the owners cultivate them as carefully as Americans tend their vegetable gardens. Little machinery was used until after World War II, when the United States, in an effort to help the French increase their food production, supplied them with tractors and other equipment.

France is the leading wheat-growing country of Europe, next to Italy, and long loaves of bread form a major item in the diet of the people. Other crops raised in France include vegetables, fruit (apples, grapes, pears, plums, peaches, apricots, and cherries),



Drawn for the American Observer by Craig

sugar beets, hops, and oil seeds. In the south mulberry leaves are raised for silkworms, and acres upon acres of flowers are cultivated for the perfume industry. Sheep, cattle, goats, and chickens are raised, and along the coast fishing is important.

WORLD TRADE. Each year France buys and sells abroad several billion dollars' worth of goods. Around 30 to 40 per cent of her trade is with her colonies, and the rest is chiefly with the United States, Britain, Germany, Belgium, and Australia. Chief exports are yarns and textiles, clothing, machinery and metal products, chemicals, perfume, and wine. Leading imports are machinery, coal, oil, grain, coffee, tobacco, and certain raw materials such as textile fibers.

FOREIGN POLICY. France's foreign policy has been one of cooperation with other nations of the West in an effort to maintain world peace and improve economic conditions. She is a powerful member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a leader in the United Nations. Since the war, France also has shown an unexpected willingness to help promote a united Europe. She has even been willing to deal with her long-time enemy, Germany, on a basis approaching equality. The Schuman plan for pooling the iron and steel resources of France and Germany was a French idea.

France and the United States have a long history of friendship. The two countries have fought side by side in the two World Wars. And since the last war, the United States has spent millions of dollars to help revive France's economy. A surprisingly large number of the French people are unaware of the extent of this aid or the reasons the United States is willing to give them so much. Many believe our country has lent the money for some selfish purpose, perhaps to gain a hold over France, and Communist propaganda fosters this feeling.

DEFENSES. Despite the fact that France has been fighting a war in Indo-China for the past five years, it

was the first country of Europe to come forward with a commitment of troops for the new Western European army. France plans to have 10 divisions of land forces trained and equipped by the end of this year, and ten more by 1953. At the same time she plans to double the number of her warships and increase her air force from 26 to 70 groups. This would mean that by 1953 France would have over 900,000 men under arms, plus several divisions of trained reserves ready for call.

GOVERNMENT. France is a democratic republic with the lawmaking power in the hands of the National Assembly. There is a President, whose powers are limited, and a Premier, chosen by the President and the Assembly, who is the real head of the government. France has a measure of socialism. Some of her industries and public utilities—coal, electricity, railways, gas, insurance companies, banks, and a few factories—are owned and operated by the government.

HIGHLIGHTS OF HISTORY. France has a history that dates back to the time of the Roman empire, and it began to take shape as an independent nation some 15 centuries ago. Through the centuries France rose to a position of leadership in the world and became a center of culture, art, and learning.

France's great scholars and writers were among the first to express the ideas of liberty and the dignity of the individual which today form the foundation of democratic thinking. France itself early accepted the idea of government by the people. French soldiers fought on the side of the colonists in the American Revolution, and a few years later France itself revolted against its king and set up a republican form of government.

This century has seen a great decline in France's position as a world leader. Two disastrous World Wars in 30 years left the country weak and faced with tremendous economic and political troubles both at home and in its colonies. The French are tackling these problems with vigor.